

UNCLAS HARARE 001198

SIPDIS

AF/PD FOR COX AND ROBERTSON, AF/S FOR KRAFT AND SCHLACHTER, AF/RA FOR DIPALMA, INR/R/MR, NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ZI PREL PHUM

SUBJECT: "STANDARD" EDITORIAL DEFIANT

¶1. In the wake of his May 16 arrest for "publishing false stories," the editor of the independent weekly "Standard," Bornwell Chakaodza, used his May 19 editorial as a defiant bully pulpit. Excerpts:

¶2. ". . . Daring to tell the truth, even the obvious truth, is now a dangerous occupation. . . (Information Minister Jonathan) Moyo has declared war on the free press and will do whatever he can to crush it beneath his clumsy boot. Fortunately he won't succeed.

". . . History tells us that when ruling parties start legislating to protect themselves, when they begin to punish dissent, then their days are numbered. ZANU PF's good fortune has been the good-natured tolerance of Zimbabweans, but that tolerance is wearing thin. . . If they think that passing laws in a rubber-stamp parliament, or buying powerful weapons of oppression, will lengthen their stay, then they're sadly mistaken. It also needs to be said that if the police or Jonathan Moyo thinks that arresting and charging journalists will silence the press, then they too are in for a surprise. It won't - and the angrier they become, the more entrenched and resolute will be the determination to carry on."

SULLIVAN